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**Beth Tarasawa (Sociology)**

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## New faculty member's research background helps push to infuse service with scholarship

Three years of working and teaching in a service-learning program at Emory have **Beth Tarasawa** (Sociology) excited at joining St. Norbert's push to align service-learning with the academic experience.

Her own research has already contributed to the common good in Atlanta, where she has been looking at educational inequality across racial and class groups.

Tarasawa is one of 15 [new and visiting professors](#) who joined the college at the start of this academic year.

### Teaching for change

At Emory, Tarasawa worked in the Office of University-Community Partnerships while she was completing her Ph.D. and, as an instructor, taught in its Community Building and Social Change Fellows Program.

That office worked with public school systems, refugee programs, housing authorities and environmental efforts. And her students here are already starting to get a taste for what real-world sociology might be like.

At St. Norbert, Tarasawa finds a college that has already espoused the notion that service can be infused with scholarship. She says, "These students are some of the smartest and the most gifted and the most academically ready students by the time we're done with them, and they're equipped with skill sets that I don't know that they always necessarily recognize."

She hopes to start working on courses that develop components where students are actually doing research projects that benefit community organizations:

"Oftentimes, you find [these organizations] have a great network of people doing volunteer work but they could use some help in best practices research. Or maybe they want to administer a survey to the people they are working with. We can provide some of those intellectual resources that would cost them thousands of dollars.

"For the most part, the level of research they need, our students can meet and exceed. They're learning these things in their methods classes. I think

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we bring a particular skill set that isn't utilized in most universities the way it can be.

“This is a big thing, especially for students going into graduate school. They need to be able to talk about how their research and scholarship and service inform one another.”

Researching ethnic diversity and competition in education

Tarasawa’s own research focus has been on new immigrants to the South, and particularly on ethnic diversity and competition in education.

“In Atlanta, immigrants are primarily first-generation, who are still learning English. Historically the South has been this black and white racial struggle. How do these groups that are pre-established accept or resist the increasing number of immigrant students?”

There has been an assumption, as the number of immigrants in a population increases, so resources like English-language education increase.

Tarasawa found that, above and beyond these demand pressures, the levels of segregation within schools and school demographics over time also affected the availability of resources. She looked at the mismatch between schools and their neighborhood catchments. Atlanta has a big private school sector so a lot of students were opting out of their particular public neighborhood school.

“I found that these different measures did have an effect. Above and beyond these supply and demand arguments, what in sociology we call competition measures, also had an affect on resources within schools.

“We’re moving to these parent-choice models. We’re finding, the more agency the parents have, that they often exacerbate what we call race-specific outcomes. These market-choice model policies could actually have the unintended effect of exacerbating inequality.”

Work has been done in this area nationally as well as in Atlanta, and Tarasawa is now gathering information on the immigrant and refugee populations in Green Bay and the Milwaukee area.

